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ISSUES OF FAITH

A COURSE OF LECTURES

Apostle's Creed

BY

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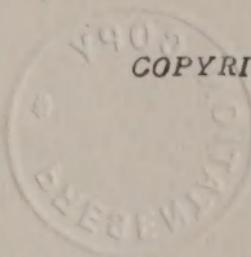
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PREFACE

THESE lectures were delivered during Lent, 1917, in S. Peter's, Eaton Square, and in S. James's, Piccadilly. To the Rev. Austin Thompson, Vicar of S. Peter's, Eaton Square, I owe both the courage to publish them and the title under which they are published.

That title plainly does not properly suit the subject of the first lecture. Belief in the Holy Spirit is fundamental and is not an issue of faith. To the subjects of the other lectures the title is, I hope, appropriate.

The aim of the course is to consider those articles of belief which are contained in the third paragraph of the Apostles' Creed. There is no attempt at originality, and expressions of obligation would be out of place. When dealing with central beliefs we can only try to say as well as we may be able what it is committed to the Church to say.

W. T.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
CHAPTER I.	
THE HOLY GHOST ...	1
CHAPTER II.	
THE HOLY CATHOLIC CHURCH ...	14
CHAPTER III.	
THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS ...	29
CHAPTER IV.	
THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS ...	42
CHAPTER V.	
THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY, AND THE LIFE EVERLASTING ...	55

ISSUES OF FAITH

I

THE HOLY GHOST

“I believe in the Holy Ghost.”—The Holy Ghost is the active energy of God. God is immutably the Ruler and Father of His world ; He made it, and made it according to His own law. There is no escape from the operation of that law. In that sense He is eternally King. There is no part of the world where, to use a legal expression, His writ does not run. His law is all-pervasive, as are what we call the laws of nature, which are merely those of His laws which govern the physical world. Thus, for example, the law of gravitation always works. The way we bring ourselves under its operation

may depend on us, but it will always work. It may depend on us whether or not we walk over the edge of a cliff ; but once we walk over a cliff we cannot hang suspended in the air ; we must fall to the bottom. The law of gravitation works always and everywhere. So it is with the spiritual laws of God.

Further, we have to remember that a law operates wherever it produces results which would not be there but for its existence. Consider, for example, the law of the State. The law says you must not steal, and if you do steal you will go to prison. The law works in one way or the other. We do not escape from the operation of the law when we obey it for fear of its action. In that case it has prevented our doing what, apart from it, we should have done. Neither do we escape from its operation when we do the thing that it forbids ; on the contrary, it asserts itself in bringing about the consequence which it enacted against us. But we may escape detection and so avoid the law of the State. We cannot escape God or avoid the operation of His law. We can if we like conduct our lives upon the principle of pure selfishness and self-seeking ;

only, if we do, we shall bring disaster upon ourselves and all about us. And then the law of God has operated. Now in that sense the Kingdom of God is an eternal fact that cannot in any way be affected by us. But while it is true that the law of God operates even when people do the things which it forbids, because it brings against them the consequence which it had enacted against all departures from its commands, yet that was not what the law was aiming at. What the law was aiming at was not that men who steal should go to prison, but that men should not steal. And so while it is true that the sovereignty of God is absolute and unchangeable, and manifests itself in act when those who live contrary to His will become involved in the disaster which attends upon evil-doing, yet that is not the whole of His purpose. Thus while there is one sense in which God eternally has absolute sovereignty over the universe, there is another sense in which we have been taught to pray "Thy Kingdom come."

At the beginning of His ministry Christ rejected all the ways there are of forcing

men's wills ; that is at least part of the meaning of the three-fold Temptation. He would not bribe them by appeals to creature comforts ; He would not overwhelm them with irresistible evidence ; He would not bring to bear upon them the means of coercion, whereby earthly rulers establish and maintain their kingdoms. But He would live before men a life of love, so winning their devotion. And He contrasts the Kingdom that He was founding with all other kingdoms in exactly that respect. "Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles, lord it over them : and their great ones exercise authority over them. But it is not so among you : but whosoever would become great among you, shall be your minister : and whosoever would be first among you, shall be servant of all. For verily the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."¹ The Kingdom of God, which was through Him to be established in the world, was to rest on willing obedience freely rendered by men, because in answer to His love their hearts

¹ S. Mark x, 42-45.

had been drawn out in love to Him. That is the basis of the Kingdom ; and because in Him the nature and love of God were made intelligible, as they had not been before, therefore through Him God gained over the hearts of men a greater power than He had exercised before, and a new kind of power.

There is only one way in which our lives can be controlled by any power without our feeling that our freedom has been interfered with, and that is when others gain our love and devotion. When we do something in order to give pleasure to one whom we love, our action of course is determined by that other's pleasure, and yet there is no conduct in which we feel to be so freely expressing ourselves as this. Here, and here alone as far as human experience shows, you find the way in which our conduct may be controlled without our freedom being overridden. If then God's Kingdom is to be not only sovereignty over the consequences of our deeds, but sovereignty over the very hearts and wills which He has made, it follows that it must be a Kingdom rooted in love. And there is only one way in which love can prove its presence

to those who do not immediately recognise it and respond, and that is by sacrifice, or, in other words, the doing or suffering of what, apart from love, would not be done or suffered. If therefore God is to reign, not over the outward course of events alone, but over our innermost hearts and wills, over our feelings and desires, it must be by His own self-sacrifice. He had been working in the hearts and minds of men before Christ came ; but He works in the hearts of men in an altogether new way, and with enormously increased power, by means of His self-revelation and the consequent pouring forth of His new power into our lives. So John the Baptist had contrasted his mission with that of Christ. He was the culmination of the long prophetic line ; he had to call men to repentance and to administer that baptism which represented the washing away of past stains. “ I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance : but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear : he shall baptize you with holy spirit and fire.”¹ He will not only be able to give

¹ S. Matthew iii, 11.

assurance that the past is to be overlooked, but He will do what the old dispensation could never do ; He will supply the new power by which men may live in the future more nearly according to the will of God.

It was such a power that came into our lives when Christ Himself came into the world, and died, and rose again. His apostles shared the actual life of Christ, having Him by their side to turn to in all emergencies, listening to the words of eternal life. We tend to think that no blessing could be so great as that. But He says “ It is expedient for you that I go away : for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you ; but if I go I will send him unto you.”¹ As long as He was there, they would be permanently relying upon Him, as one with them and at their side, for enlightenment and support ; and we know what happened when the great test came to the disciples’ faith. They forsook Him and fled. Yet these same men a little later became the nucleus of the Church militant and triumphant, because, in place of the Presence at their side to whom they

¹ S. John xvi, 7.

turned, He has returned in the Person of the Holy Spirit to dwell within their hearts. We remember how the three appearances of the Lord after His Resurrection which S. John selects for record all emphasise this point. “Cling not to me,” He says to Mary Magdalene, “for I am not yet ascended.”¹ It is not to Christ present in the flesh, but to Christ ascended to the Father, that men are to cling. He has lived out the life of love to its uttermost sacrifice. From that time onwards His union with God is complete; He is wherever God is, and that is everywhere. So in the second recorded appearance, He breathed upon them and said, “Receive ye the Holy Spirit.”² The Greek word for “spirit” means also wind or breath. The Holy Spirit, which He bestows, is to be the very breath of our lives. In the third appearance S. Thomas also was there, but his was the faith that rested on external evidence. The Lord immediately adds that there is another faith which can dispense with this, a higher quality—“Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.”³

¹ S. John xx, 17. ² S. John xx, 22. ³ S. John xx, 29.

This power, that comes upon us from the manifestation of the love of God, is what we Christians call the Holy Ghost. Everywhere in the New Testament the word “spirit” means energy, triumphant power, something that makes a difference and manifests itself in changed activity: not something that is to be chiefly found in retirement, but rather in the busy activities of the world. Under the old dispensation, the old form of the Divine energy, men had been substantially in the position of servants who receive orders and who are obedient on the ground that anger is aroused against those who are disobedient. But now it is, “No longer do I call you servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I heard from my Father I have made known unto you.”¹ We are taken into the confidence of God; we are allowed to understand. This is the contrast between the new position of Christians and that of all others. And it is won by the Spirit within us, for “as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For ye received

¹ S. John xv, 15.

not the spirit of bondage again unto fear ; but ye received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father.”¹ We are drawn into the very family of God, united with Him in the bonds of an intimate affection. Why does this Aramaic word “Abba” occur in the middle of a Greek letter ? Surely because it was the word that our Lord used in His prayers. Something in His tone as He said it must have imprinted it upon the memory and imagination of His disciples. We have been adopted into the family of God and taught to address Him as Abba, Father. The Spirit of God Himself is in our hearts, because we have seen and understood God’s love and it has won its own response from us. That response is the measure of His power over our hearts. This power was won by the Incarnation, whereby the Kingdom of God in its full form was launched into the world.

We always know of any energy what its true nature is when we watch it active in its whole power ; and so it is Christians who can tell most truly what is the Holy Spirit of God. He had indeed been active all along. He

¹ Rom. viii, 14–15.

moved on the face of the waters ; He spake by the Prophets. But only in Christ is His nature and power completely revealed. We can see in S. Paul from time to time a very close identification of the Holy Spirit with Christ, as, for example, in the passage at the end of the third chapter of the Second Epistle to the Corinthians—" Now the Lord is the Spirit : and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." ¹ And we remember in the Acts of the Apostles how the writer speaks indiscriminately of the Holy Spirit and the Spirit of Jesus. In the Gospel of S. John, the culmination of New Testament theology, we find at once the identity and the difference expressed in the well-known words : " If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may be with you for ever, even the Spirit of truth : whom the world cannot receive ; for it beholdeth him not, neither knoweth him : ye know him ; for he abideth with you and shall be in you. I will not leave you desolate : I come unto you." ²

¹ II Cor. iii, 17.

² S. John xiv, 15-18.

We know that when S. John spoke of the Eternal Word he was thinking of that power of God, that self-expression by which the worlds were made and history had been guided through all time. Then, through the perfect self-expression in Christ, there came into men's hearts the new power. He speaks of that sonship which in one sense is ours of necessity, because in every way we owe to God our very being: but in the particular Christian sense, sonship is won for us through Christ. "As many as received him, to them gave he the right to become children of God."¹ The power He has won over us is that same power of God that had guided history before, but now reaches its own plenitude by its own revelation of itself in human form in Christ. So S. Thomas Aquinas says quite expressly that if the Spirit did not proceed from the Son, He could by no means be personally distinguished from Him. He is, as fully known to us, the Power of the Love of God as exercised through the perfect expression of that Love in Jesus Christ. So He comes when the life of love has issued in

¹ S. John i, 12.

the Death, Resurrection, and Ascension which complete and crown it. But before that, as S. John says, “ There was not yet Spirit ; because Jesus was not yet glorified.”¹

Our faith then is fixed upon God, the Eternal King and Father reigning in absolute majesty and in the light that no man may approach unto ; but also upon that perfect revelation of His love, whereby He finds His Kingdom in the new and perfect form. In future it is to rest, not on the imposition of authority, but on the winning of a free obedience from those whose hearts have been touched by His love. In the hearts that are thus responsive to Him He dwells in the Person and Power of the Holy Spirit, transforming them into the likeness of His own love and filling them with energy, zeal, and devotion for the cause of justice and love throughout the world.

¹ S. John vii, 39.

II

THE HOLY CATHOLIC CHURCH

“I believe in the Holy Ghost; the Holy Catholic Church.”—“I believe one Catholic and Apostolic Church.” In both the Creeds that we use in our Church Services the Church itself finds a place. We are not led to regard it as some piece of chance machinery which has been devised for the carrying on of Christian work in the world, nor as some societies which may be founded by a number of devout, or pious, or enthusiastic people, who have seen that there is need of some particular action, and bind themselves together in order to secure that action is taken effectively. It comes as an element in the very constitution of our faith, immediately after our expression of belief in the Holy Ghost, the active energy of God. For it is through the Church chiefly

and normally, though of course by no means exclusively, that the Holy Ghost carries out in actual operation the purpose of God for His world.

After the Lord's Ascension all there was to show for His ministry was a group of people who were united to Him by the ties of discipleship, and who, because they were all united to Him, were linked to one another. So far as we know, there was not in existence any document, not even any collection of His sayings, written on paper or parchment, nor was there a formally constituted society with definite rules and objects clearly laid down. But there was a group of people who were bound to one another by their common discipleship to Him ; and upon them, as they remained in fellowship with one another, there came, according to His promise, the power of God in the gift of the Holy Spirit, in the gift of that active energy of God of which we spoke last week, by which they were enabled to carry out His work. The first marks of the Church are the closeness of its fellowship and its consciousness of dependence upon its Lord. It was just this fellowship that subsequently

expressed itself in that early experiment in communism, of which much has been written and said, and about which surely the one important point is that it would never have been made at all unless there had been in that little society the belief that no man can live to himself in any department of life. And so they could not hold that they possessed anything for themselves, but "they had all things common; . . . as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, and laid them at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto each, according as any one had need."¹

Plainly, it was an experiment that could not last in just that shape, for apparently the money was in no sense invested but merely used as there was need. What really matters here is the closeness of the Fellowship which had found expression in this scheme. That Fellowship S. Paul expects to gather within itself all men of every race, lifting them above every division that separates one group of men from another. In the fellowship of the

¹ Acts iv, 32-35.

Church, or, as he would prefer to put it, in Christ Jesus, the deepest of all divisions based on religious faith becomes negligible ; there is neither Jew nor Gentile : the deepest of all divisions based on culture and civilisation becomes negligible ; there is neither Greek nor Scythian : the deepest of all social divisions becomes negligible ; there is neither bond nor free, servant nor master ; even that division of sex on which the whole social fabric rests becomes negligible, there is neither male nor female ; but what ? One man in Christ Jesus¹—the whole human race governed by one purpose, and that the purpose of Christ. To all intents and purposes it would be a single personality, “one man,” acting together under a common direction while each member of the body, each limb of the body, does that particular service in the life of the whole for which it is fitted. The vividness of this sense of fellowship, and also the decay which has marked it as the years have passed, is seen in the history of that word “member.” The word member means a limb. Nobody had ever been called a

¹ Gal. iii, 28 ; Col. iii, 11.

"member" until S. Paul called his converts "Members of Christ"; they were limbs of Jesus Christ. It was a new expression intended to signify just this complete unity which the different members of the Church had with one another in their common dependence upon their Lord. "Now ye are the body of Christ, and severally members of it";¹ each one of you is a different limb with a different function to perform, but there is only one life running through you all. It was necessary to invent a new expression for the new experience. Nowadays one can be a member of any group or society which has hardly any common life. Membership has lost all its original suggestion of being a limb in a connected whole. That sense has gone and we badly need to restore it.

In the Epistle to the Ephesians, in which S. Paul put the whole of his theology, and especially his theology of the Church, he looks forward to a time when at last all individuals will thus become members of the one body. It is to that end that all the gifts have been bestowed on the Church. They are given

¹ I Cor. xii, 27.

for the perfecting of the saints, unto the work of ministering, unto the building up of the Body of the Christ : “ until we all come to a perfect man ”—not each of us of course becoming that perfect man, but all of us together constituting that “ one man in Christ Jesus,” which is—“ the measure of the stature of the completion of the Christ.” So he has already said in the last verse of the first chapter of this epistle that the Church is the “ completeness of him who all in all is being completed.”¹

Christ is King by right and title ; but His Kingship is defective or incomplete so long as members of His Kingdom deny, or fail to recognise, His sovereignty. In this sense the growth of the Church is the growth of Christ Himself to His completeness. S. Paul looks forward to the time when all are so united in dependence on Him as to constitute a single moral personality—“ one completed man, the measure of the stature of the completion of the Messiah.”² Only when all

¹ There is no conceivable excuse for the translation of that verb as active or middle. It is a true passive as Origen and S. Chrysostom saw plainly. Cf. J. Armitage Robinson *ad loc.*

² Eph. iv, 13.

men of all nations are incorporated into the Body of Christ will He have an instrument fully adequate to the fulfilment of His purpose. Only then shall we see fully manifested what is the power and the greatness of Christ. Meanwhile, the whole Body, so far as it yet exists, each part supplying that with which it has been itself endowed, builds itself up into its final perfection in the unity of that love which is the nature of God and is given by Him through Christ to the men that are in Christ.¹

S. Paul has two metaphors by which he speaks of the Church in its relation to its Lord. He speaks of it as the Bride of Christ, the worthy object of His perfect love, and to that we shall have to attend in the next lecture when we come to consider that extension of the whole idea of the Church beyond the limits of this world, which is immediately afterwards suggested to us in the Creed by the phrase "the Communion of Saints." He also speaks of it here as the Body of Christ. There are in the New Testament three things which are spoken of as the Body of the Lord :

¹ Eph. iv, 16.

one is His fleshly frame, His body in the days of His earthly ministry ; one is the sacramental bread ; the third is the Church. And in each case the word " Body " means the same thing. The difference between my body and any other physical thing is that when I want it to move it moves, whereas, with regard to any other physical thing, if I want it to move I must bring my body up against it and push or pull. My body is distinguished from all the rest of the physical universe by the fact that it is in immediate correspondence with my will ; that is what " body " means. The body is the material expression or instrument of will and purpose. When S. Paul calls the Church the Body of Christ, he quite plainly means that the Church exists to be the instrument of the will of Christ, the expression of His thought to the world, as His fleshly body was in the days of His earthly ministry. We need very much to recover this sense of the Church as existing to do the will of Christ. We always tend to think that it exists first for the benefit of those who become its members. It is indeed true that it confers on those who become its members

quite inestimable benefits ; but it is not in order to confer those benefits that it primarily exists. It exists to do the will of Christ in the world, and, as part of that will, confers benefits upon all men who come into its fellowship. It is His Body, given to the service of His will ; it is His army, pledged to warfare on behalf of His Kingdom. An army does not exist for the soldiers who compose it ; you ask them ! An army exists for the sake of the nation to which its soldiers belong. It is not for their sake that there is an army ; it is for the sake of the nation and the cause which it has espoused. So the Church exists in the first place, not for us who are its members, but for the Kingdom of God.

We often hear the phrase “a good Churchman” ; it ought to mean one who is absolutely given up to the service of God’s Kingdom, the carrying out of His will,—one who is in very fact a member of His Body, and whose whole life is directed by the life which flows into him, as into the rest of the Body, from Christ the Head. But very often “a good Churchman” means one who gives most of his time and existence to questions of ecclesi-

astical arrangement, which are indeed important because they may assist or hinder the cause of Christ. But so often this primary object slips out of sight, and the world comes to regard "good Churchpeople" as fully occupied with things that have no ascertainable relation to the great general problems of human life which beset us all. We must first remember this genuine purpose for which the Church exists, and which is the true end of its being, before we consider what should be its constitution. This question must be judged in the light of the former.

Once we have got that conception firmly in our minds, then we may go on safely to ask what is the necessary constitution of a Church which exists for such a purpose. The Church, we say, is Holy and Catholic. It is Holy. It was the habit of S. Paul to address his converts as holy—*ἅγιοι*—even though he was just immediately about to take them to task for their slackness in dealing with grievous moral scandals among themselves. Holiness as a mark of the Church does not mean that the individual members of it are personally perfect. It means that

the Church is endowed with the Divine life and that its members are given an opportunity as that opportunity is not elsewhere provided, of receiving the Divine life and living in its power ; its whole essence is, in fact, that Divine life which came into the world with Jesus Christ and is in Him offered to men. It is, of course, always perfectly possible that those who constitute the Church and are also members of the non-Christian or semi-Christian world should be moulded by the influences of the world, even though they remain externally members of the Church ; and this very often happens on a wide scale. The Church as a whole then becomes worldly and thus forfeits all right to existence—because there is nothing left to distinguish it from any other group of persons—except indeed in so far as it maintains the same Word and Sacraments through which the Divine Life is ever offered so that at any time men's hearts may again be open to receive it.

The next mark of the Church is that it is Catholic. It is a Greek word meaning universal. We are perpetually tempted, and perhaps more at present than at most other

times, to make the Church universal in the sense of including everybody, by clearing away everything that anybody dislikes. But this alluring process leaves us at last professing a belief in "a sort of a something," to use the phrase hallowed by Parliamentary use on a notable occasion.

This belief in a sort of a something is a belief which everybody is perfectly able to adopt, and which makes no difference to him when he has adopted it. The Church is not Catholic in the sense that it presents no boundaries, and affirms nothing of which it must regard the denial as definite error.

But it must be Catholic in the sense of maintaining the whole of the Christian faith and truth, so that every human soul will find there that particular aspect of the Divine fulness upon which he most naturally lays hold. For I suppose it is quite true that there are very few people who really live by the whole of the Catholic faith ; for nearly all of us there is some part that comes home with far stronger power than the rest. To some the Church and the Communion of Saints are full of vital power, while others there are to

whom the doctrine of the Church has little meaning and the Forgiveness of Sins comes home with constraining power. There are very few of us who have faced in any living way the whole range of the Christian faith ; but just for that reason the Church must uphold the Christian faith in its entirety, in order that all may find there that which they need. But in the Church's claim to be universal there is an enormous implication. The aspirations of men are almost infinitely various, and the kinds of religion which they set up for themselves when they come to give expression to their spiritual desires baffle computation. How can we ever hope that there will be devised a scheme which shall unite all ? It cannot be devised ; it is only if the Church is in very truth the creation of God Himself that there is any hope of its being truly Catholic. Its Catholicity is secured by the fact of its holiness, by the fact that in it there is at work the very energy of God ; and all its order is designed to give emphasis to just this truth, that here is something which exists by Divine will, into which men come. Its life is not something offered by man to

man ; it is something offered by God to man.

That is why only those who have received the Bishop's commission may celebrate the holy mysteries. Whenever the Bishop acts he acts as the instrument or organ of the entire Church throughout all times and all places—of the Church which is the Body of Christ. The divine origin of the Life offered to men by God through Christ in the Church will be forgotten unless the institutions of the Church perpetually suggest it. That is why the sacramental vehicle of that life must be given by those specially appointed to give it. The whole order, and the very posture in which we receive, is all designed to bring home to us this fundamental thought, that the life which is in the Church, and is ever in the Church for the sustenance of our souls, is a life given by God, not the invention of men, nor devised by them, but offered by God, and received by men in so far as they are able to receive it. The Church is either nothing at all, or else it is the channel and instrument of God the Holy Ghost, the active energy of God ; and as the Holy Spirit works in the fulness

of His power only upon those whose hearts have been opened, because they have seen and believed the revelation of God in Jesus Christ, so it is true that the Church can only retain its activity and its efficiency, and can only be all that it was created to be, in so far as its members perpetually bring themselves back into the Presence of Christ in prayer, in meditation, in Communion, feeding upon Him in their hearts.

III

THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS

“I believe in the Holy Ghost ; the Holy Catholic Church ; the Communion of Saints.”—We have considered the Holy Spirit, the active energy of God at work in the world and in the hearts of men. We have considered the society of Christ’s disciples, His Body, the instrument of His will, through which and in which the Holy Spirit is especially operative. In the next clause the Creed goes on to remind us that the fellowship of Christ’s disciples is not divided by death, that there death makes no division.

After the Temptation in the Wilderness the Lord had come preaching and proclaiming the Kingdom of God. He had said that it was at hand and that men must repent and make themselves ready for its advent. He

had said nothing about His own position in the Kingdom. In the first stage of His public ministry He had spoken to all who came ; He had healed and cast out devils. But gradually the opposition or indifference of men led to a change of policy ; this change was also due to the fact that those who were interested often fastened their attention to a great extent on the mere wonder-working of His miracles, and not upon the spiritual significance of the miracles or of the whole ministry. And so at that time He chose twelve that they be with Him, and began to withdraw Himself. He goes on two long journeys outside the boundaries of the Jewish people, and so away from the places where controversy is likely to arise ; first to the north-west to Tyre and Sidon, and then almost immediately after to the north-east to Caesarea Philippi. There is nothing so well calculated to promote intimacy as a walking-tour. Now that His chosen friends have been in this way alone with Him on these two long journeys or walking-tours, coming under the influence of His Spirit, uninterrupted by the discussions and questions of the Scribes and Pharisees,

He feels that they are ripe, and asks them who men suppose that He is. "Who do men say that I am ?"¹ They mention various conjectures which had been put forth ; John the Baptist, Elijah, one of the prophets. And then He turns and asks them, "Who say ye that I am ?" S. Peter answers, "Thou are the Christ, the Son of the Living God." "You are the expected Messiah, the culmination and completion of the long history of Israel, the pivot round which the whole world's history turns." The Lord at once recognises that this is a revelation given by God to S. Peter. "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah ; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." When He had first called Peter to be a disciple He had greeted him with the words, "Thou art Simon the son of John"—you are the person whom we know by that name, a person of impulsive temperament, ardent, eager, not very reliable ; you shall be called "Cephas," a name befitting a very different man. You shall earn the name of the Man of Rock. And now the new name is earned. The quality

¹ S. Mark viii, 27-30 ; S. Matthew xvi, 13-20.

that entitles Simon to be called Peter is the faith which can see the reality beneath appearances.

After all a hostile critic could have said that our Lord was a village carpenter who had turned preacher, not a very impressive figure. “Thou art Peter”—Cephas, the rock-man; “On this rock I will build my Church.” On the quality that entitles Simon son of John to this new name, on the faith that can perceive the Messiah in a form so unlike that which men had come to expect, the Lord would build His Church; “and the gates of death shall not prevail against it.” Our translation—“the gates of Hell”—is of course to modern ears misleading. Hell, here as in the Creed, is Hades, not the abode of evil spirits, nor the place for the punishment of the wicked, but merely the abode of the departed; the gates of Hades, death or the grave, cannot prevail against the fellowship of this society, itself built upon the faith which sees God in Christ Jesus. Gates are very plainly that part of a wall through which passage is possible; they are opened that they may receive those who are to pass

through, and then they close again. They represent the power of a boundary to make separation where there had been none before. The gates of death can make no separation in the fellowship of Christ's disciples, because, though this fellowship exists in the process of time, it is based on and constituted by a perception of the eternal beneath the forms of time. And so, as we often sing in Wesley's hymn :

One family we dwell in Him,
One Church above, beneath,
Though now divided by the stream,
The narrow stream, of Death.

The chief experience in which this unity can become actual and realised is worship. In all worship, if it is true worship, we are united in spirit to all those who on earth glorified God. Most especially is this true of that service which we call the Holy Communion, the service of the Holy Fellowship or Communion of Saints. It was said in the last lecture that one of the reasons why the Church insists so strongly upon due order in the administration of that service is that it may insist that our spiritual life is indeed the gift of God, and not the invention or discovery or creation of man. Only those

may celebrate the holy mysteries who have been commissioned and appointed to do so by the Bishop ; and the Bishop, when performing functions which are limited to the episcopal office, acts as the representative of the entire Church in its whole extent of space and time. Consequently every priest, when he consecrates the Bread and Wine, does so as representative of the whole Church of all times and places—not merely in the name of the few people gathered together within the church building, but in the name of all those in whom there is the Holy Spirit of God, in the name of the Communion of Saints. We should then say that all those who come to any celebration are joining in the worship of the Holy Communion, the Communion of Saints. This is the congregation, even if only two or three be physically present in the church. In that act of worship we plainly testify, in the very act of our worship, that our spiritual life is received from God. And it is one spiritual life that He gives to all who rely on Him. So in the service itself every time that we attend it we enter into that worship avowedly and explicitly :—“ Lift up your

hearts"; "We lift them up unto the Lord." And forthwith it is with Angels and Archangels and with all the company of heaven that we laud and magnify His glorious Name.

We are then one in worship with the whole fellowship of the saints, whether in this world or in the world beyond the grave; and we are one in hope. In the Book of the Revelation, in the great vision where the Lion of the tribe of Judah, who is in fact no lion, but a lamb that has been slain in sacrifice, is opening the seals which close the book of human destiny, after the first four seals have been opened and the four forces of nature have summoned the symbolic figures of terror which come with the opening of those first four seals, the scene changes. At the opening of the fifth seal we read: "I saw underneath the altar the souls of them that had been slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: and they cried with a great voice saying, How long, O Master, the holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And there was given them to each one a white robe; and it was said unto them,

that they should rest yet for a little time, until their fellow servants also and their brethren, which should be killed even as they were, should be fulfilled.”¹ The departed saints are waiting until we have entered into the fulness of their sacrifice, until we too have given our lives, whether in long service or in death, to the cause of Christ in the world, and have completed our offering. For, as the writer to the Hebrews says, “These all, having had witness borne to them through their faith, received not the promise, God having provided some better thing concerning us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect.”² So they with us are still looking forward to the same great fulfilment, and we are united with them in hope.

And again we are one with them in effort. One of the most curious features about the history of our recent religious thought has been its contraction during a period when knowledge was extending its province by leaps and bounds over the vast spaces of the universe. For while we know far more about this great universe than our fathers did, yet

¹ Rev. vi, 9-11.

² Heb. xi, 39, 40.

we perpetually tend to think that the whole purpose of God is limited to this world, and that spiritual and moral issues are determined wholly on earth and wholly by our wills. It is not the New Testament view. All the great saints have been conscious that they were engaged in a struggle which extended far beyond this planet upon which for the moment we are living, that the issues were far vaster than any man can ever know, but that upon them the responsibility for the whole great cause is resting.

We remember again in the Revelation how it is said that there was a war in heaven, which is there represented as following upon the completed triumph of humanity in Christ when the man-child born of the woman was snatched up to God and to His Throne. "And there was war in heaven : Michael and his angels going forth to war with the dragon ; and the dragon warred and his angels, and they prevailed not, neither was their place found any more in heaven."¹ The conflict extends right through the whole realm of the spiritual world. And again S. Paul bids us

¹ Rev. xii, 7. 8.

be clothed with the armour of God, because “our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.”¹ Right through the spiritual world the conflict rages. We have to do our duty at our own post, but upon our fidelity vast issues may depend. It is only one point in the line at which the sentinel keeps watch. But the safety of the whole line, the success or failure of great strategic plans, may depend upon his vigilance. So it is in the spiritual conflict.

If hopes were dupes, fears may be liars ;
It may be, in yon smoke concealed,
Your comrades chase e'en now the fliers
And but for you possess the field.

It will often inspire us again if, when our worship becomes dead and cold, we can remember that our prayers and praises are sustained by the worship of the heavenly hosts, those whom we have admired, and those whom we have loved, but who are no longer at our side. But still more is it a consolation and strength

¹ Eph. vi, 12.

to think that we can still serve those who have passed away, because we are members of the one fellowship.

Perpetually we may hear people say, and especially in this sad time, that they want still to render service to those whom they have loved ; they want still to show their devotion, and they have no way because the barrier of death keeps them apart. It is not so. The gates of death do not prevail against the fellowship of Christ's Church, and it is still possible to show devotion by giving further energy to our service on behalf of the one Kingdom of God which includes both them and us, and on behalf of the one cause, for whose triumph they with us still hope. Or we hear of those who have some debt that they may never have paid, and then death has come ; and they can never do anything now to show that they are grateful for services done them by those who are gone on. Oh yes, they can. They can serve the one Kingdom of God which includes both them and us and hasten the fulfilment of the hope in which we are one. Saddest of all is the case of those who have wronged someone and done grievous

injury for which they would like to make reparation ; but now it seems too late. But indeed it is not too late ; they too are still members of the one fellowship, still they are one with us in effort and in hope, and in all that we do out of devotion to God and His Christ we are helping them towards the fulfilment of that to which they still are looking.

We know quite well that in this great war there must be often soldiers who know nothing of the general plan of campaign at the moment, but only know the task laid on them in a certain place for the next few hours ; but while they do not know what the whole plan is they do know that upon their faithfulness to that one task the success of the whole plan may depend. So it is with us.

There is only one plan of campaign, and our Lord and Saviour is the Captain of all the armies. We are soldiers in this army of the Lord—the army at the head of which His disciple saw Him riding forth when the heaven was opened. “ And I saw the heaven opened ; and behold, a white horse, and he that sat thereon, called Faithful and True ; and in righteousness he doth judge and make war.

And his eyes are a flame of fire, and upon his head are many diadems ; and he hath a name written, which no one knoweth but he himself. And he is arrayed in a garment sprinkled with blood : and his name is called the Word of God. And the armies which are in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen white and pure. And out of his mouth proceedeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations ; and he shall rule them with a rod of iron : and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness of the wrath of Almighty God. And he hath on his garment and on his thigh a name written, King of Kings, and Lord of Lords.”¹

Let us try to recover this sense of the unity of the whole spiritual life, the one fellowship of living and departed in the service of Christ, the one cause that they and we exist to serve, the one allegiance that they and we must own.

¹ Rev. xix, 11-16.

IV

THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS

"I believe in the Holy Ghost; the Holy Catholic Church; the Communion of Saints; the Forgiveness of Sins."—We have considered the Holy Spirit, the active energy of God at work in the world; we have considered the Church, the fellowship of Christ's disciples, in which the Holy Spirit is at work in the fulness of His power; we have considered that that fellowship is not limited to this material life, or this planet on which we live, but includes all those who love the Lord Jesus in this world and the next, the Communion of Saints. And when we pass to the Forgiveness of Sins it seems as if we were no longer dealing with the same order of thought, but as if it had now changed to something different, something no longer corporate and collective, but almost purely individual. That,

however, as we shall see before we have closed, is not the fact. One line of thought carries us forward from the earlier articles into this and those which follow; this last paragraph of the Apostles' Creed gives us a quite definite and coherent scheme of belief.

A great many of our troubles about forgiveness and the whole doctrine of the Atonement come from our thinking of God in a way that is inadequate to the Christian revelation. We are perpetually thinking of God as though He were some remote official with whom on particular occasions we have to do, and before whose Judgment Seat at last we shall be brought. Indeed the prisoner in the dock is not, as I suppose, at all commonly concerned with the pain that he may have given to the judge by his past misconduct; he is thinking of nothing whatever except what the judge is going to do to him; he has no personal relationship with the judge at all. And all through, if we take our analogy from the law courts and the ordinary means of administering justice on behalf of the State, we shall be endeavouring to work out what is meant by Divine forgiveness with the help of terms

which are not only inadequate, but are definitely opposed in their general suggestion to that with which we have to deal.

From this conception of God comes that idea of forgiveness which makes it consist mainly in remission of penalty, because all that we have to think of in our dealings with a judge is whether or not he is going to let us off. But in dealings with those whom we love, with those to whom we are united by any bond of real affection, that is not what we mean by forgiveness. A son who had in some way injured or betrayed his father, and who came and begged to be forgiven, would not be thinking of the remission of some penalty that the father might inflict; he would be meaning simply this: Can you continue to treat me as if this thing had never happened? In any relation of friendship the same is true. If we have at any time injured and betrayed a friend, and we seek out that friend and ask for forgiveness, we are not asking that some penalty may not be inflicted, we are asking for restoration to the old relationship, that we may again be trusted as though we had not been found faithless. Now the whole of the

Christian's relation with God stands upon this higher plane, and not upon that where the relationship of judge and prisoner arises. We remind ourselves once more of the classical utterance in the Epistle to the Romans : " Ye received not the spirit of bondage again unto fear, but ye received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father." ¹ We do not stand over against a taskmaster whose displeasure we are to dread, but we stand as children before a Father, bound to Him by ties of intimate affection.

The forgiveness of sins for the Christian will not, therefore, first and foremost mean delivery from the consequences of his sin. Forgiveness will mean first and foremost the restoration of the relationship between a man and his God which the sin had disturbed. We come to God saying that we have sinned, and asking whether He can still treat us as though we had not sinned ; will He try us once again ? Every time we say the Confession of Sins, and hear in answer the words of Absolution, we admit our past faithlessness, and in answer comes the promise that in spite of it He still

¹ Rom. viii, 15.

trusts us and renews His confidence, while His love has all the while remained unbroken. That is what forgiveness really is. And what Christ delivers us from is not chiefly the pains of hell or other consequences of sin, but is sin itself. It is not written that His Name should be Jesus because He should save the people from the punishment of their sins, but "thou shalt call His name Jesus, for it is He that shall save His people from their sins." And we know quite well that in actual experience what our Lord does for us is to change that which is evil in our desires and inclinations. As we dwell in His presence all that is mean and base and impure is excluded ; such thoughts and desires cannot find a place in the soul whose gaze is directed towards Jesus Christ. So long as our thoughts are fixed there, so long as we are holding by His hand, these things which are the origin of sin find no place in us. It is only when we let go, when we withdraw ourselves from the influence of His love and the thought of His Cross—it is only then that all those evils which have their origin in self begin to assert themselves and become active.

We remember how S. Paul describes the difference between his spiritual state in Christ and that which had been before. The law had stood over against him pronouncing condemnation, and he had been unable to fulfil its demands ; he knew that it was right. In calm moments of reflection his will was set upon the thing that the Lord commanded, but in moments of temptation he gave way : “The good that I would I do not, and the evil that I would not that I do.” He finds himself in a state which must be described as dead, drawn this way and that by passions and desires, though he recognised all the time what is the true way to life ; he would follow it, but fails hopelessly until he finds power in Christ. “O wretched man that I am ! who shall deliver me out of the body of this death ? ” The answer comes swift and sure : “I thank my God through Jesus Christ our Lord.”¹ The real horror of sin is not fear of the punishment that it will bring, but fear of the sinful state itself and the repetition of the sinful act ; and it is from this that Christ came to deliver us.

¹ Rom. vii, 7-25.

It is, of course, true that if Christ cleanses us from the sin, changing the state of our soul, He also, incidentally, saves us from the penal consequences of the sin. If our hearts are changed it will no longer be appropriate for God to act towards us as though they were still unchanged. We can imagine a man who in early youth has committed some crime, but has been undetected. He has changed his whole manner of life and has lived for many years as a good citizen, respected by all ; and in old age perhaps the crime is brought home to him. We all know perfectly well that there would be prompt and immediate outcry if the State proposed to inflict the same penalty which would have been appropriate had he been caught in the moment of his act. People would say, “ He is no longer the man who did that thing ; it is there in his past history, but he is not a criminal, though he did once commit a crime.” And though the law might require for the assertion of its principles that some penalty be inflicted, and though the man himself would quite readily assent for his own self-respect that penalty should be inflicted, yet it would not be the same. Similarly, if

Christ delivers us from sin, we may certainly say that He therefore incidentally delivers us from the punishment which otherwise the sin would have brought upon us. This is, as I have said, what in fact our Lord's life and death achieve. We have seen that the Kingdom which He came to found was rooted in respect for man's freedom. It was to be built upon the free allegiance offered by man voluntarily to the appeal of His love. There was to be no coercion whatever. And therefore His love goes on perpetually offering this forgiveness, but perpetually showing also what it costs, for it is by the revelation of what our sin costs God, as we see it before us in Gethsemane and the Cross, that men are most of all won from the sin itself.

But it is commonly said that forgiveness is a demoralising thing ; and there are those who are ready to stand by the position that they will not seek forgiveness ; they will bear the consequences of what they have done even if it means exclusion from the very Presence of God. Of course the root of such an attitude is very largely pride. The Christian religion says nothing about our meriting pardon, and

does not indeed allow that we can merit pardon ; it says that we must accept it as a gift that we do not deserve. Forgiveness may become demoralising if we think of its restored relationship with God as coming about through God's saying, "Never mind." If the conception of God which the doctrine of forgiveness creates in our minds is one of which that phrase is a true expression, then forgiveness would impair the holiness of God and demoralise mankind. Are there any conditions on which the full personal relationship can be restored without these evil results ?

There are only two conditions. One is when the appropriate punishment has first been inflicted. There is a great verse in the Psalms which says : "Thou heardest them, O Lord ; Thou forgavest them, and punishedst their own inventions." To give heed, to forgive, to punish ; that is a possible mode of treatment. Forgiveness is given, because there is to be imposed that which will show the real evil in the self-will which constitutes the sin. And there is only one other way, and that is that He who forgives should show what the wrong has cost Him. If I have injured a

friend and come to him and say “Can you not forgive me ? ” and he says “ Oh yes, never mind ! ”—that is demoralising ; and if I have any real self-respect, I shall myself find it so and resent it. But if he should say, quite simply and sincerely, “ I do not think anything ever caused me so much pain, but still we will forget it ” ; and if I can really believe this, then the standard is upheld, the wrong is not condoned, yet the forgiveness may be complete. That is what we have in Christ. No one feels that his sin is made light of, when the word of pardon is spoken from the Cross. My sin cost God all that. Only because He has shown what it cost Him can He rightly forgive it, for only so is the forgiveness compatible with His own holiness or our moral welfare.

It is for this reason that it is dangerous for us to believe in the Love of God unless we have first learnt to know Him as one that is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. The Gospel of the Divine Love will be demoralising unless the inexorable demands of righteousness are first recognised : “ Elias must first come.” And when the Gospel comes, it

must tell us how He can only forgive in such a way as to display His own distress, His own horror, at the evil thing. But if the word of forgiveness is spoken out of the agony of the Garden, if it is spoken from the Cross, there can be no suggestion that God does not mind. His righteousness and justice are vindicated, and through them, not without them, forgiveness given. The love is poured out for sinners, but that must only, can only, safely be asserted when it is known what is the cost of our sin to God. Thus as the Cross safeguards the Divine forgiveness from in any way compromising the holiness of God, so does it preserve forgiveness from being demoralising to ourselves.

We are now in a position to meet the chief difficulty felt by most people with regard to the Atonement. How, it is asked, can my forgiveness be won by the sufferings and death of one who lived and died so long ago ? How can Christ's Death make any difference to me ? To the latter question we can answer at once : How can it fail to make a difference ? It has altered the history of Europe and affected its civilisation. It has moulded the

influences that have moulded me. But of course this does not constitute Atonement. We come to that when we remember three things : first, that Jesus Christ is not just one man among others, but is the revelation in one human life of the eternal God. What we see in Gethsemane, on Calvary, or at the opened tomb is not just a historical event, but the eternal God, as He bears the burden of the world's evil, my sin included, and triumphs over it. The way that the soldiers pained Him, or the disciples who forsook Him, or Peter who denied Him, or Judas who betrayed Him, is the way that I pain Him now. The other two things to remember are those which we have just been recalling : that salvation is not from penalty but from the sin that incurs the penalty ; and that forgiveness is not remission of penalty but restoration of friendship.

Then we see how it is that we can plead Christ's Passion on our behalf and say that

between our sins and their reward
We set the Passion of Thy Son our Lord.

We pray thus, because the Love displayed in the Passion has transforming power, and will,

if we submit our souls to its influence, mould us in its own likeness, so that we can also pray :

Look, Father, look on His anointed Face
And only look on us as found in Him.

It is “as found in Him,” as we shall be when His Love has finished its work upon us, that we are acceptable to God. And because one day “we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is,” the Father even now renews His trust in His children though we so often prove untrustworthy.

As it is only by fellowship with Christ that we come under the full power of the Holy Ghost; or remain living members of His Body the Church; or enjoy the privileges of the Holy Communion, the Fellowship of Saints: so it is only by fellowship with Christ that we become worthy or capable to receive the free forgiveness which is offered in Him. We must kneel at the Cross if we would be pardoned, for only from the Cross can the word of pardon be spoken.

V

THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY, AND THE LIFE EVERLASTING

“I believe in the Holy Ghost; the Holy Catholic Church; the Communion of Saints; the Forgiveness of Sins; the Resurrection of the Body, and the Life Everlasting.”—And so at its end the Creed points us forward to the eternal destiny that awaits us, the destiny of ourselves and of mankind. It was not Christianity that first gave to men the belief in man’s survival of bodily death. That was indeed a familiar thought; and if we are to understand the way in which the Church formed its doctrine, it must largely be through recalling to mind the conceptions about the future life which had existed previously.

We naturally begin with the Old Testament, and we remember that in earlier parts of it,

and indeed almost throughout its course, there was an anticipation of life after death. But it was a life shadowy and impoverished, the life in Sheol. It helps to bring out the change that Christianity wrought when we consider the different senses in which one particular phrase is used in the Old Testament and the New Testament. In the Old Testament we have the phrase "sojourner" applied to man in his life on earth. "I am a stranger with thee, and a sojourner as all my fathers were."¹ The idea there is that man is only permitted a short space of time upon the earth's surface in the light of God's sun and in God's presence ; then he will be hidden away out of sight in that shadowy unknown world of ghosts, which the psalmist calls Sheol ; there he will be cut away from the hand of God, no longer having a life that is fit to be called a life, but persisting in this poor and miserable existence. That was the ordinary Old Testament belief for a very long time. Perhaps the most familiar expression connected with it is that which we find in Psalm lxxxviii, verses 2 to 4 : "For my soul is

¹ Psalm xxxix, 14 (P. B.).

full of trouble : and my life draweth nigh unto Sheol. I am counted as one of them that go down into the pit : and I have been even as a man that hath no strength. Free among the dead, like unto them that are wounded and lie in the grave : who are out of remembrance and are cut away from thy hand ” ; and again in verses 10 to 12—“ Dost thou show wonders among the dead ; or shall the dead rise up again, and praise thee ? Shall thy lovingkindness be shewed in the grave : or thy faithfulness in destruction ? Shall thy wonders be known in the dark : and thy righteousness in the land where all things are forgotten ? ” But this is not singular ; we find exactly the same thought in the Prayer of Hezekiah, which is recorded in the Book of Isaiah : “ Behold, it was for my peace that I had great bitterness ; but thou hast in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption ; for thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back. For the grave cannot praise thee, death cannot celebrate thee : they that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth. The living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I do this day.”¹ Here upon

¹ Isaiah xxxviii, 18, 19.

earth, during the years between the physical occurrences of birth and death, is the one opportunity that man has of worship and serving God, living in the light of His Presence. After that there remains a ghostly and poor existence in Sheol. It is not until much later that anything like the hope of a real immortality appears. Between the two there was a transitional period, specially inspired by the hope which sprang from the prophets' recognition that the restored Israel would be leading an incomplete life unless that life were shared by the heroes of the past ; thus they came to believe that along with the restoration of Israel, which would be the inauguration of the Messianic age, the great ones of the past would revive, in order to share in Israel's glory. This stage is represented by an oracle of uncertain date incorporated in the writings of Isaiah of Jerusalem : " Thy dead shall live : my dead bodies shall arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust : for thy dew is as the dew of light and the earth shall cast forth the shades." ¹

But it is not until the suffering of Israel

¹ Isaiah xxviii, 19.

under Antiochus Epiphanes that full belief in immortality appears in quite definite form. We find it in the Old Testament in the Book of Daniel, which comes out of the fiery furnace of that persecution. There we read the explicit statement : “ Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament ; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.”¹ This book belongs to the resistance offered by the Maccabees and the Chasidim to the tyrant. The successors of the Chasidim were the Pharisees, whom we find in the New Testament fully believing in immortality, while the old conservative and priestly party, the Sadducees, have not accepted it.²

When we turn from Israel to the surrounding countries we find that the prevailing belief was very similar. It is true that there was inculcated in the mysteries a belief in a real immortality at the beginning of which would

¹ Daniel xii, 2, 3. ² S. Mark xiii, 18 ; Acts xxiii, 8.

come definite judgment. Plato, basing himself on this, describes, as the alternative awards to be expected at that judgment, eternal punishment for those who were incurably wicked, and a life among the gods for those who had lived a blameless life ; and between the two a pilgrimage in another world for a thousand years, during which men's lot would be according to their moral conduct while on earth ; at the end they would be given a fresh opportunity of rising to the life of communion with the gods.¹ But though this might be taught in the mysteries, and we find it taken over from the mysteries as a framework of the outlook of so great a philosopher as Plato, yet the bulk of the people still held a belief substantially identical with that of the earlier Israelites. The prevalent view in historic times is still that of Homer, who represents Achilles, who after death is king among the shades, as speaking to Odysseus and saying, “ Better be a slave upon earth, than king among the shades.”

Why was this great truth, which seems to us so central, left in concealment for so many

¹ *Republic*, Bk. x (The Myth of Er).

ages in the training of mankind to receive Christ? Is not the answer simply this? The great concern of the Christian religion, towards which if we are Christians we believe that all religions are pointing, however much they may by the selfishness of men be distorted into something else, is to sweep us out of our self-concern, so that we centre ourselves upon God, who is Love. Salvation is union with God; God is Love; therefore to be saved is to be rooted in Love. The Hell from which we need to be saved is just the principle of Self.¹

There is one great crisis through which all of us must pass; there is no avoiding it; and if in that supreme moment we should apart from all faith in God know assuredly what was going to happen to ourselves, then the temptation to let our lives remain right up to the end, and even in the prospect of eternity, self-centred, would be almost irresistible. But, in fact, when we consider the end of our days on earth, we are at once thrown back upon

¹ Cf. Baron F. von Hügel on "What do we mean by Heaven and Hell?" in the *Church Quarterly Review* for April, 1917.

what we know concerning God ; we only come to the knowledge of our own immortality through what we believe concerning God ; for God is to be the centre of our thoughts, and not ourselves or our own destiny. The true Christian will not be concerned very much about his own state in this world or in any other world ; he is concerned about God, the will of God, and the coming of the Kingdom of God. And it helps us in this orientation of thought and life if all our knowledge concerning the life beyond comes from our faith in God, and not through some independent revelation, whether given by God or not, whereby men, even while ignoring God, may still be assured concerning their own future. Our life derives a great part of its moral value from the fact that it is an adventure. We are to stake everything upon the love of God.

When we face the question what should be the basis of our assurance concerning what awaits us in the other world, we find the answer here ; we have learned that God is Love and therefore will not allow us to flicker out of existence. It is part of the faith upon which

we are to stake our all, and it becomes itself part of the great adventure, and not a security upon the basis of which we make some investment against eternity. Therefore it was only when the revelation of God as Love was made complete through the revelation in Christ, that there was given in His Resurrection something approaching the real pledge of our immortality. For we have to remember that S. Paul always regards the Resurrection of Christ not as something unique, but as the first-fruits of the resurrection of mankind. “But if there is no resurrection of the dead neither hath Christ been raised : and if Christ hath not been raised, then is our preaching vain, your faith also is vain.”¹

But why did the Church insist so strongly upon its doctrine of the Resurrection of the Body ? It was first and foremost in order to ward off that thought of immortality of which we have spoken, representing it as a mere life of ghosts and shadows. The life beyond the grave we all believe is not a poorer life, but a life in which we have lost no faculties or interests or any of those things which make up

¹ I Cor. xv, 13, 14.

the completeness of our personality. Nothing will be dropped off, but we shall carry with us in the life beyond everything that is of value. Nothing is to be lost; not even that which is mortal is to be lost; but it is to be carried through and swallowed up, entering into the whole composition of the fuller life beyond. The hope is "not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be clothed upon, that what is mortal may be swallowed up of life."¹ That was one main concern of the Church, as it formed its doctrine in a world where the belief of the early Israelites, the belief of the heathen generally, was prevalent. It insists on the immortality of the complete personality wherein we look forward to rejoining our friends with all about them still that we have loved and valued; whatever it was that marked them off and made them attractive to us here we shall find there, their peculiarities, their aspirations and their enthusiasms, their affectionateness, their laughter.

But this was not the only concern of the Church when it inserted this article in the Creed. We can easily imagine what might

¹ II Cor. v, 4.

happen in the Churches founded by S. Paul with his insistence upon the supremacy of the Christian conscience and the subordination to this of all rules and regulations, which the Christian conscience has the right to set aside when it deems fit. It would easily happen, and we know in fact that it did happen in the Church of Corinth, that his converts misunderstood his doctrine of the Spirit and began to care little about moral conduct. We find him writing there to complain that the Church which boasts particularly of its spiritual gifts is none the less very lax in its toleration of gross immorality. That is one of the great concerns of the first Epistle and of part of the second ; and it appears that there was in Corinth an instance of what we know took place elsewhere where the body was not properly honoured. People were disposed to say that it is only the spirit which is immortal, and what we do to our bodies cannot touch that. Against this false spirituality the doctrine of the bodily resurrection is a bulwark. Everything that enters into the life of the body affects the whole personality ; our bodily actions do concern our eternal destiny ; and

it was largely for the sake of this insistence on the eternal consequences of bodily deeds that the Church emphasised the Resurrection of the Body.

No doubt in about the early third century it was interpreted in an utterly materialistic way. The people of that age did not know as we know that the body is in perpetual process of change, and that at the end of seven years there is in it no single atom which was there at the beginning of that period. And they supposed that there would be a real resuscitation of the material particles of which our bodies are composed. That, however, is mere framework. S. Paul is quite free from such materialism. To the ultra-spiritual party at Corinth he says : “ Now I admit this, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God.”¹ We need not vex ourselves about the physical side of the question ; but we believe that our entire personality, with the fruits of all its actions, is immortal through the Love of God.

Upon that we depend. God is Love ; and Love is always for individuals. God will not

¹ I Cor. xv, 50.

leave those whom He made as the objects of His love merely to vanish away. He is the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, of this man or woman and of that ; and it is living men and women, not dead men and women, whom He loves and who are called to love Him in return.

The issues of our faith which, after the first article, constitute this third paragraph of the Apostles' Creed are not a mere haphazard collection of points, but lead from one to another in an ordered series.

Having confessed our belief in God the Father, as He is made known and revealed through the Life, Death, and Resurrection of His Son, we go on to express our faith in the Holy Ghost, the active energy of God at work in the world : in the Holy Catholic Church, the Fellowship of Christ's disciples, in which more especially the Spirit is at work, because His power only reaches its completeness in the case of those who understand the Love of God, and therefore can render an intelligent response : but that Fellowship is not limited to this planet ; it exists and labours also in the world beyond the grave : through our

membership in that society of those who love the Lord Jesus we learn to know that our sins are forgiven through the Love of God; it shows us the cost which for our sin God has been willing to pay: and from that we pass to the thought of our own Eternal Life in God and with God. It is through Christ that the knowledge of God has come which makes us receptive of the influence of the Spirit. His Life is what binds the Church together in the one communion and fellowship. It is only as we dwell perpetually in His Presence and receive into ourselves His Life of love and sacrifice that it may be our life, that we become fully receptive of the influence of the Holy Spirit, living members of the Holy Catholic Church appropriating our privileges in the Communion of Saints, fitted to receive forgiveness of sins, inheritors of the life beyond the grave, where our personality at last reaches its fulfilment according to the design of God.

We believe, we put our trust, in the Holy Ghost, who, working through the Holy Catholic Church, builds up the great Communion of Saints, through membership in which we

learn to desire and become fit to receive the Forgiveness of Sins, whereby we hope for the Resurrection of the Body, that purification of our whole being, including even the source of temptation, which is the condition for inheritance of the Life Everlasting.

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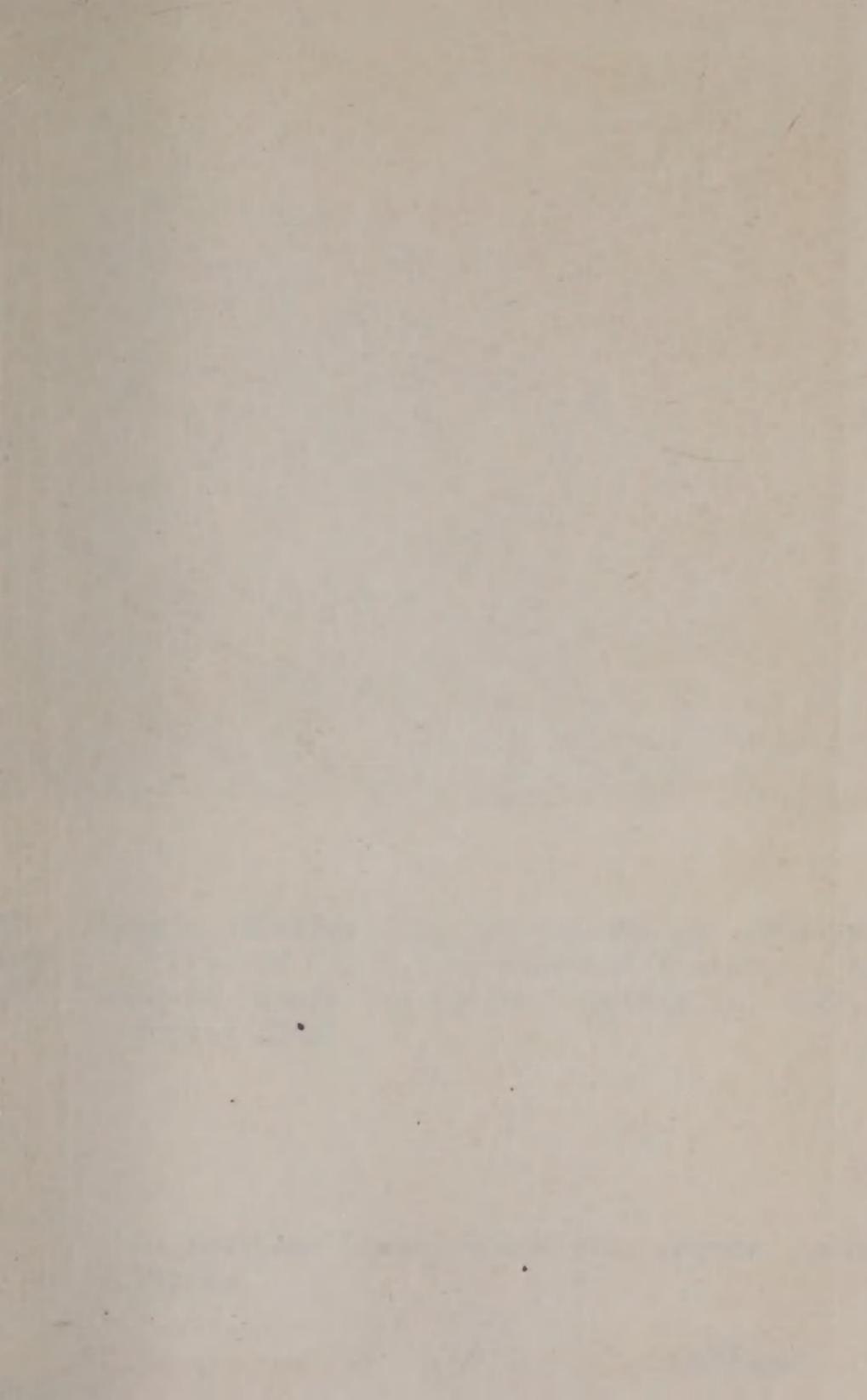
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